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Onischenko Calls for Food Patriotism, Early Working Hours

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Chief Sanitary Inspector Gennady Onishchenko implored Russians to temper their interest in exotic, foreign foods and instead, to stick to a "patriotic" diet of traditional national cuisine.

"We put our faith in the high level of consciousness and food patriotism of our citizens, the ones who have long abandoned the use of such food in their diet," Onischenko said at a briefing, Interfax reported Tuesday.

He added that the foreign foods did not pose an overwhelming risk to the Russian population since most people's diet still consists of traditional dishes.

This is not Onishchenko's first tirade against foreign comestibles. He has previously warned about eating burgers and raw fish in sushi, suggesting that these foods have worms. But while the watchdog earlier said sushi bars required special sanitary monitoring, on Monday he said

they would not be put under special control.

Onishchenko's campaigns against foreign foods are sometimes suspected of having political undertones. In the past, he has led attacks against European vegetables, Georgia's Borjomi mineral water, Georgian and Moldovan wines, Polish meat, Ukrainian lard and Latvian sprats, with all of these proposed bans taking place at moments of diplomatic tension.

Onischenko also had advice for those suffering from the summer heat.

"There is a good recipe — come to work early. I came to work today at 2:45 a.m. Heat was no problem, if you can believe it," he said, though he added that the rest of the population could be more lax and delay the start of work until 6 a.m.

Aside from enjoying a refreshing walk to work, early birds get the added benefit of riding in a near-empty metro, the chief sanitary inspector said.

"You can ride in an empty metro and pinch yourself and ask, 'Am I really riding a metro car where there are just three people and not 200 who are squishing each other?'" Onischenko said.

But the chief sanitary inspector also expressed his dissatisfaction with the physical appearance of some men in public during the warm weather, having observed them in "some kind of spotted little pants that stop above the knees, and with a stomach that's falling out."

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